

## **Testimony in Support of HB 2888**

*Representative Dacia Grayber*

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in regards to House Bill 2888.

Our representative government should reflect the lives and lived experiences of its citizens. It should be home to those who come from rural communities, city communities, low-income, high-income, young, old, and a range of professions that speak authentically to the Oregon experience.

The realities of our current citizen-legislature, however, is that it asks Representatives to either only work part-time, not work at all, or in the interim balance legislator responsibilities with that of a full-time job. This is not feasible for most, and it especially closes the door on working-class, low-income, and marginalized communities for whom the stakes of public policy could not be higher, and whose voices our state has a critical need to hear.

In my capacity as a firefighter and paramedic, I spent this last year working more overtime hours than I ever have before, with some weeks clocking in at 72+ hours on shift at a time and well over 100 hour workweeks. These hours were mandatory due to workforce shortages, and I was put in a position where on top of these exhausting weeks I still had to carve out time to work with staff on interim responsibilities as a legislator. I could not take time off during my shift for anything less than a full day of unpaid leave to execute legislator responsibilities because that does not clearly fall under employment protection. My choices were to either abandon my crew for an entire day in the midst of a staffing shortage so I could attend meetings and workgroups for a few hours, or miss these essential pieces of the legislative and rulemaking process.

There are several steps we could take to swing our door open a little wider, and make it possible for a broader range of working professionals to participate in Oregon's legislature. The bare minimum of those options is to protect employees who are willing and able to balance their professional responsibilities with their legislator responsibilities by allowing them to take necessary unpaid time off during their work-day to serve the officially sanctioned needs of the legislative and rulemaking process like workgroups and task forces.

House Bill 2888 clearly defines and upholds these protections, and I ask that you support its passage through your committee. Thank you.